

## FREE SPEECH CAN BE EXPENSIVE

you're watching the 11:00 o'clock news  
when a chevron commercial congratulates  
itself for preserving the endangered  
el segundo blue butterfly in buckwheat  
planted at the el segundo chevron refinery.

since you didn't just fall off the buckwheat truck,  
you have no doubts that they are performing  
this public service under some sort of  
court order, probably one that they spent billions  
trying to resist.

but that's not even the punch line:

when the news returns, the first story  
is that the southern california air  
quality management district has just  
announced its list of the year's ten  
worst industrial polluters.  
yeah, you got it:

numero uno is the el segundo chevron plant.

## "WHAT DOES SHE SEE IN HIM"

a character in an iris murdoch novel  
says, of marriage, "one should never  
commit onself until one is amazed  
at one's luck."

i've had three wives and i still  
find it hard to believe that they  
were attracted to me, but they said  
they were, and they seemed to be.  
same with a few other women.

if they weren't, thank god they  
didn't tell me so, didn't say  
they loved me for, say, how well  
i explain the punctuation of  
the compound sentence.

but there have always been  
so-called objective observers  
occupying the fringes of one's social  
life who have never hesitated to  
ascribe to my women every possible  
motive, noble or base, except attraction.